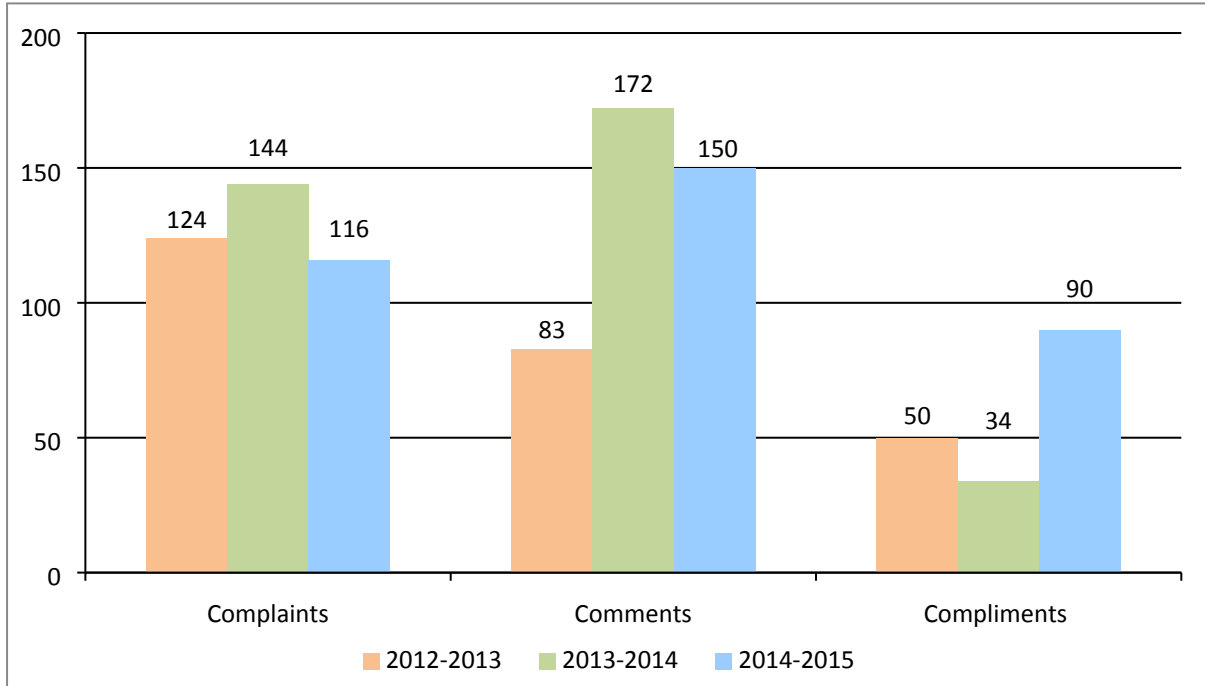




Whole Authority Customer Feedback and FOIA Statistics

April 2014 – March 2015



Complaints

- 116 Complaints

Stage 1 - Informal Resolution

- 100 Complaints

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

- 25 Complaints started
 - 4 complaints escalated from Stage 1 (2013-2014)
 - 1 complaint proceeded straight to stage 2 (2013-2014)
 - 4 escalated to stage 2
 - 16 proceeded straight to Stage 2

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Of the 25 formal complaints, 6 complainants went directly to the PSOW. He referred them to us for subsequent investigation.

4 complainants progressed their complaints to the PSOW after formal investigation (they are not related to the ones mentioned above). After initial enquiries the PSOW decided not to carry out any further investigation.

Most common aspects of services complained about:

- Highways
- Environment and contact
- Passenger transport

Note: Social Services complaints are dealt with separately under the Social Services complaints procedure. **43** complaints were received, **82** comments and **116** compliments were made about the service.

Received

	Total	Access to Service	Communication Issue	Data Protection	Decision Delay	Discrimination	Member Conduct	Quality of Service	Quality of Works	Reduction in Service	Result of Process	Service Delayed	Service not provided	Service Removed	Staff Conduct	Timescales
Children & Young People	4							1			1			1	1	
Support Services																
Access unit	1							1								
Finance service																
Adult Education service																
Pupil Referral and Inclusion service																
Additional Learning Needs and Special Learning Needs service	2										1				1	
Early Years Education service	1													1		
Monmouthshire Youth Service																
Flying Start service																
Acorn Integrated Children's service																
21st Century Schools Team																
Children & Young People not allocated Specific Team																
Enterprise	17		2					9			1				5	
Development Plans																
Housing	3							2							1	
Estates & Sustainability	1							1								
Libraries	1		1													
Museums																
Countryside	2							2								
Leisure	8		1					4			1				2	

Enterprise																
Employee Services																
Enterprise not allocated specific team	2														2	
Chief Executive	95	2	10		1		1	57	4		6		6		8	
Partnerships, Policy and Performance and Communication & Engagement																
Local Democracy	1						1									
Customer Relations																
Emergency Planning																
Legal Services	2							2								
Public Protection	4							1	1		2					
Development Control	11				1			8			1				1	
Building Control	1							1								
Democracy and Regulatory not allocated specific team																
Business Support and corporate accountancy																
Internal Audit																
Revenues, systems and exchequer	6		2					3					1			
Finance not allocated specific team																
Property Services	2	1						1								
Environment & Contact	18		1					13			1		2		1	
Highways	22		2					14	2		1		1		2	
Transport	1														1	
Passenger Transport	21	1	3					14					1		2	
Operations not allocated specific team	6		2						1		1		1		1	
External																
Total	116	2	12		1		1	67	4		8		6	1	14	

Comments

- 150 Comments

Total	150
Chief Executive	108
Development Control	6
Environment & Contact	55
Highways	26
Local Democracy	2
Passenger Transport	7
Public Protection	7
Revenue, Systems & Exchequer	5
Enterprise	41
Countryside	1
Estates & Sustainability	2
Housing	1
Leisure	21
Libraries	4
Enterprise not allocated specific team	12
External	1

A selection of comments received concerned:

- Loud music at an event held at Caldicot Castle
- Unhappy with deterioration of building
- Having no policy with regard to new fast food outlets being opened up in close proximity to schools.
- Sale of council owned land and planning application
- Concerns over the payments of council tax arrears and the way they are being handled
- Dog waste bags are no longer available
- A suggestion that provision possibly be made at the new Usk HQ to allow residents in the central area of the county to have access to basic one stop shop facilities.
- Website difficult to navigate; looking for opening times of the recycling centres in Monmouth and Chepstow and request replacement bags
- Waste not collected
- Online procedure did not work for permits for garden waste bags
- No collection points in Gilwern for the recycling bags
- Disappointed with the quality of bags
- Grass cuttings left on the grass/disgusted with the manner in which grass cutting was undertaken
- Suggestion to dig up all the paved roundabouts (Abergavenny) and plant the wildflowers
- Concerns over the driving of a recycling lorry

- Price increase this year for garden waste.
- Council number appears 'withheld' on the telephone.
- Condition of football stand
- An overdue letter was received for an audiobook that was returned.
- Feels there is a bad environment at the library caused by teenagers using it
- Issues with wifi at the library
- Asked to reconsider the recent price increase for the squash courts.
Suggestion that they introduce peak and off peak charges for squash courts or introduce a membership package.
- Issues around Monmouth swimming pool being demolished; the new pool should be open before the old one is closed, potential loss of the pool
- Swimming charges for OAPs in the school holidays
- Comments made by an instructor
- Increase of price of sports facilities in Abergavenny Leisure Centre
- Website has everything but postal addresses
- New version of the website has either eaten or hidden the link to library services. Wishes to download e-books and it just is not possible with this site.
- Comment received via email to put the link for postal code details on the same page as the calendar regarding grey waste collection.
- Garden waste payment page is not easy to find on the website, neither is it easy to reply to a comment left on the garden waste page.

Compliments

- 90 Compliments

Total	90
Chief Executive	68
Customer Relations	2
Development Control	4
Emergency Planning	1
Environment and Contact	23
Highways	34
Infrastructure & Projects	1
Passenger Transport	1
Revenues, Systems and Exchequer	2
Enterprise	6
General	1
Housing	3
Libraries	1
Enterprise not allocated specific team	1
Children & Young People	15
Access Unit	3
Additional Learning Needs and	3

Special Learning Needs service	
Early Years Education service	5
Finance	3
Support Services	1
Covers all of MCC	1

A selection of compliments received:

A range of compliments about the whole of the Council was received – staff thanked for their professionalism, their quick responses, their efficiency and helpful service.

Some examples:

- FOI response clearly presented in an open, friendly manner.
- Emergency Planning exercise Crash-a-tank - thoroughly enjoyed it and picked up loads of really useful things.
- Thanks in relation to a decision notice. 'I wish all local authorities were as quick and as professional as yours. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned.'
- Impressed with the diligent and carefully balanced way the matter was handled.
- Inspector's visit was most professional and very friendly.
- Rang the Chepstow One Stop Shop; the call automatically transferred to the Monmouth OSS who took the details of the problem and suggested that the person called into the OSS in Chepstow. By the time the person walked down to the Chepstow OSS (10 minutes at the most), they had received a call from Monmouth, sorted a solution and so when the person walked in he didn't have to do any explaining, just picked up the solution. Feel this was customer service of the highest order – really excellent and impressive.
- Lots of compliments about the fabulous wild flower displays on roundabouts and grass area. Also for the beautiful meadow planting of a number of grass verges and roundabout areas and how wonderful for our wildlife.
- Thanks for quick receipt of new grey caddy's / bags. Impressed with the efficiency of the service.
- Very good attention whilst visiting Monmouth's One Stop Shop. Always greeted with courtesy and friendliness if ever need their assistance.
- Thanks for the repairs (newly-repaired road and resurfaced sections) carried out.
- Thanks for the support received, have a place to call home after a long and turbulent life on the streets - loves the new accommodation.
- Thanks to the team for the concert at Caldicot Castle in November, it was great.
- Compliments about the SEN / ALN service expressing appreciation and thanks for all the ALN team had done to ensure appropriate placements.
- Thanks for the superb work recently undertaken in Mardy.
- Delighted at the result of work, making the Square not only safer but much more attractive for residents and visitors alike.
- Holes in the road have been filled in - would like to thank all the highways department. It was getting impossible and now much improved.

- Thanks to all staff who worked on the operational stages of the NATO summit to ensure that there were no transport related issues which contributed to the success of the event.
- Thanks for getting the street light and tree sorted. The men have just finished trimming the tree from around the bus shelter and it looks a lot better - everyone who uses it will be grateful for their help.
- Very helpful after alert to MCC about a road hazard caused by a roadside grit bin and its contents dumped in the road by hedge/bank cutting. They were impressed when within 48 hours the hazard had been cleared up and a replacement bin installed.
- Thanks for getting Leasebrook Lane swept
- Thanks for repairing the drainage problems outside the rectory. Life is so much safer now for the inhabitants of and visitors to the rectory, we are very grateful.
- Thanks for arranging for the gritting lorry to service the top road in Coed-y-Paen. Now they have the comfort and security of knowing they can travel more safely in future winters.
- The bus turned up exactly as promised and the driver was another excellent ambassador for MCC and the Passenger Transport Unit
- Thanks received for being able to access the Countryside's interactive map and reporting a fault on a footpath. Felt it is well designed and very easy to use.

Response Timescales

Our policy for responding to complaints at stage 1 is 10 working days and for stage 2 formal investigation is 20 working days plus a further 10 working days for Heads of Service to respond.

Whole Authority Timescales	2013/14		2014/2015	
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 1	Stage 2
Up to 10 working days	98	2	68	1
11 – 25 working days	18	3	23	7
25+ working days	18	11	9	17
Total	134	16	100	25

Requests for service

These are recorded and acted upon.

Total	25
Chief Executive	23
Environment and Contact	13
Local Democracy	1
Highways	6
Public protection	2
Revenue and Benefits	1

Enterprise	1
Estates & Sustainability	1
External	1

Analysis of Complaints / Comments

Year	Stage 1 complaints	Stage 2 complaints	Comments	Compliments
2014-15	100	25	150	90
2013-14	134	16	172	34
2012-13	106	18	83	50
2011-12	82	25	45	37
2010-11	72	12	11	21

Service improvements

Complaints are generally resolved on an individual basis. Most formal investigation reports make recommendations for improvements to processes. These are followed up to ensure the recommendations are addressed.

Here are some examples where recommendations have been made for changes to practices / processes / procedures, as a result of people making complaints.

Communications Issues

- Apologies given where appropriate

Appeals Panels

- Develop literature for parents to explain the process and timeline for transition planning. Parents of children with Special Educational Needs should be consulted about the literature.
- Applications for concessionary travel arrangements for children and young people with learning disabilities to be amended.
- Application forms for school transport to be viewed earlier in order to give replies to parents in a more timely manner.
- That the appeals panel has some understanding of the limitations of the young person under scrutiny when making decisions.
- The standard letter which accompanies proposed statements is amended to clarify who within the Special Needs department should be contacted if a parent disagrees with the Statement.

Highways:

- Undertake the planned resurfacing and improvements to the footways and drainage systems in St Johns Street and Glendower Street, Monmouth as early as possible in the 2015/16 resurfacing programme
- Address weaknesses highlighted in the Highway's Mayrise customer enquiry system
- Ensure that an official notice under the Highways Act 1980 is served on the owner of the land for any future works which require entry onto the land. This requirement should be entered into the Authority's Bridge Record.

Undertake repair of fence and reinstate hedge between the edge of the parapet wall and the stile. Remove the damaged material present in the stream.

- Wye Bridge - Underwater Inspections: The procurement of the underwater survey contract should be more formally programmed to ensure that the works are undertaken at the most appropriate time of year when river levels should be lower.

Contractors tasked with undertaking a formal inspection of a structure are to be instructed that any matters identified as presenting an immediate safety risk to the public are to be immediately referred to the Infrastructure and Projects Team for action.

The Infrastructure and Projects team to produce a schedule of defects recommended for attention within an inspection report (this can be a requirement of the contract). The purpose of the schedule is to provide a vehicle for the Infrastructure and Projects Team to be able to record that the recommendation has been considered and what action is to be taken in relation to that recommendation.

Officers receiving reports of defects to Authority assets are to advise the team responsible for the asset as soon as practically possible.

Appropriate officer to meet with Natural Resources Wales in order to agree a maintenance protocol. This will remove any ambiguity in respect of this task and allow action to be taken promptly.

- Licensing Section and Highways collaborate to set up a structured consultation process, including establishing one point of contact for Highways to avoid consultations being sent to different sections of the Highway Authority, and to ensure that Highways responses on licensing applications can be co-ordinated, recorded and more consistent.
- A database be considered within the relevant Highways Section to record the consultation and responses to improve the process. This can help to pick up

all relevant areas for response, such as traffic orders, vehicle weight, dropped kerb and more general public safety issues.

- The Highways Development Team review how the Section 220 process could be improved and how bonds/security could be secured when developers / owners do not meet their legal obligations.
- The Highways Development Team consider producing a Guidance Note for purchasers of properties covering the Section 220 process and Section 38 procedure, as it seems that purchasers may not be getting proper advice from their Solicitors / Legal Advisers when purchasing properties.

Development Control

- The Development Control team document all records of meetings including notes, on the Planning Portal and ensure that these are made available within a timely manner and no later than 7 days of receiving the documentation.
- That the Planning Committee Speaking protocol is amended to explicitly make reference to the treatment of anonymous objections.
- Where distances are provided by applicants some evidence of how this has been determined should be provided and if it is not then simple desktop checks should be undertaken by the case officer, particularly where distance and proximity form part of the Local Planning Authority (LPA's) deliberations.
- Records of all meetings and advice given be kept. This should now be evidenced by the pre planning advice service.
- A check on previous planning applications relating to a site should be made before progressing any new application.
- The Local Planning Authority should consider using their enforcement powers (breach of condition notice) in a more timely manner, as to ensure non-compliance issues are dealt with swiftly and not allowed to be drawn out. The LPA give more detailed consideration to the timescales specified in conjunction with the use of conditions particularly where there is likely to be several consultees involved and if there is a likely case for a statutory nuisance complaint and neighbourly dispute

- The LPA should make every effort to allocate a single point of contact for communications and correspondence with the customer and that this is made clear from the beginning. Any changes to the contact should be swiftly made and communicated to all parties involved for clarity purposes

Safety

- The layout of stalls in the outer part of Abergavenny market is reviewed by the market managers.

Recycling & Waste

- Apologies given for delays in non-collections and inconvenience caused

Commentary

The number of complaints and comments dealt with under the whole authority complaints procedure have gone down this year; complaints decreased by 20% and 13% for comments. However, a quarter of complainants were either not satisfied with the response at stage 1 or felt that they wanted a formal investigation undertaken without trying to find an informal resolution to their problems. Complainants appear to be becoming more intolerant, demanding and sometimes belligerent.

On a positive note, compliments shot up as a result of people complimenting the beautiful wild flowers on the verges / roundabouts throughout the County.

We still receive a fair number of enquiries about issues across the Authority and hopefully earlier intervention and staff engaging directly with customers solves problems straight away, reducing the level of complaints received.

Enquires are contacts made by potential complainants asking about the service provided. Where appropriate we try to resolve the problem at an enquiry stage without taking the matter forward as a formal complaint.

However, more complaints have progressed to the formal investigation stage this year. They concerned overgrown hedges, damage to land, process regarding planning decisions / breaches of planning control notice / inconsistent planning decisions, street trading, transport – non bus service, concessionary travel arrangements, adoption of road, transition process for young people, charges for council tax, staff attitude, maintenance of Wye Bridge.

Annette Evans, Customer Relations Manager

July 2015

Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations

Activity Report 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015

	2014-15	(2013-14)	
Requests received:	1002	(918)	Increase over 2013-14 = 9%
Requests closed:	1023	(906)	
Requests closed on time:	95%	(93%)	

Requests under FoI and EIR are not segregated, and figures include both.

Main focus of request	Received	% Closed in 20 Working Days
Chief Executive	688	96%
Enterprise	145	95%
Social Care & Health	103	94%
Children & Young People	66	98%
Total MCC	1002	95%

Note: Division by Department is not precise due to the cross-functional nature of many requests.

Most common sources (stated or interpreted)

Commercial	41%
Press - National	19%
Local Resident	13%
Pressure Group	7%
Political researchers	6%
Press - Local	3%
All others	11%

Most common subjects (broad categorisation)

Social Care	122
CT/NNDR	119
Processes	72
HR & Staffing	69
Highways	65
Planning	57
Procurement/Contracts	54
Educational matters	52
IT & Software	51
Intestate deaths & PH funerals	48
Public Health	39
Financial information	33
Housing	27
Trading Standards/Animal Health	27
Asset Management	21
Structures/Contacts	17
Licensing	14
Parking	14
Waste & Recycling	11
Members & Electoral matters	10
Compensation	10

Target for percentage closed in 20 Working Days

A target of 90% has been retained.

Trends over time

The number of requests received has grown every year since Fol came into force on 1st January 2005, and the trend continues. This is common to the public sector in general and is not Monmouthshire-specific. We completed our 5,000th request in the course of 2014-15.

The number of requests received by Monmouthshire in each financial year is as follows:

2004-05 (3 months only)	31	
2005-06	135	
2006-07	118	(believed that some records are missing)
2007-08	172	
2008-09	305	
2009-10	421	
2010-11	609	
2011-12	662	
2012-13	780	
2013-14	918	
2014-15	1002	